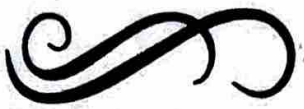
A HISTORY OF
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER MISSION
TOLEDO, WASHINGTON
1838 - 1988



PRESENTED TO THE FRIARS
OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER MISSION
APRIL, 1988

Compiled by Frank R. Ross

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of creating an updated history about St. Francis Xavier Mission was brought to my attention by the Rev. Stephen Barnufsky, O.F.M., shortly after his arrival as the new pastor of the Mission in 1986. The intent was to make it a part of our 150th Jubilee Celebration in 1988. As a member of our Parish Council at the time, I felt that this would be a great opportunity for me to learn more about our Mission, partly because I began my childhood years here, and I also have a keen interest in historic events. Therefore, I volunteered to pursue this task in my spare time, with the much needed assistance of the friars of the Mission. As is evident, I am not a professional writer, only a parishioner with an idea of preserving the past events for the use of future generations.

In the preparation of this history, much of my efforts were spent trying to find the written historic facts. Even then, I found that certain dates or periods of time are disputed. Previous fires were also a detriment to my fact findings, so in some cases word-of-mouth was the only source available. If errors are discovered, or pertinent information was overlooked, I will gladly accept the responsibility of depositing the new or revised data in the church files for the use of future historians. I hope that the information contained herein will bring fullfillment to those who enjoy history, and will serve as a reference to aid those in seeking certain information.

Frank F. Ross

1838 - 1988
St. Francis Xavier Mission

BACKGROUND

St. Francis Xavier Mission on Cowlitz Prairie, near the town of Toledo, is one of the earliest Catholic foundations in the Pacific Northwest, and the first permanently established "mission" in the State of Washington. It all began when, in 1838, after several appeals for priests were made to Bishop Provencher at Red River, Bishop Signay in Quebec, and the Bishop of St. Louis Providence, two Catholic priests, Fr. Francois Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers were dispatched on an overland expedition to the "Oregon Country". Their principal objective was to supply the spiritual needs of the Hudson's Bay Co. employees and the early settlers of the area, and attempt to convert the many Indian tribes to Christianity.

A few farmers, mostly former Hudson's Bay Co. employees of French-Canadian descent, had begun to settle in the Willamette Valley, south of the Columbia River and also on Cowlitz Prairie, north of the Columbia, near one of the Hudson's Bay Company's agricultural farms. The two priests had been instructed upon their departure to establish a permanent mission north of the Columbia River, since the boundary between the United States and the British possessions was still being disputed. Therefore, when they arrived at Fort Vancouver, Fr. Blanchet came North along the Cowlitz River and chose this beautiful site on Cowlitz Prairie for his mission.

CHAPTER I

EARLY EXPLORATION:

The first white men arrived on the Northwest coast by sea while looking for the Northwest Passage. Spanish explorers had discovered the mouth of the Columbia River but they never entered it. In 1792, Capt. Robert Gray, an American sea captain, entered the mouth of the Columbia and so named it after his ship "Columbia". He traveled up-river about 30 miles and did some trading with the Indians he found there.

In 1776, Capt. James Cook, an Englishman, had discovered by accident a valuable industry in the trading of furs with the Indians. He gave them knives, tools, guns, beads, etc., in exchange for furs, and then transported them to the Orient to trade for silks, tea, and other products the Europeans longed for. Since the Northwest was rich in animal furs, intense competition between several countries to dominate the fur trade began.

FIRST WHITE SETTLEMENTS:

After the "Lewis & Clark Expedition" of 1805, both the Americans and the English decided to establish fur trading posts along the Columbia River. The Northwest Co. of Montreal had situated many posts across southern Canada as far west as the Rocky Mts. Between 1807 - 1810, David Thompson, an employee of the Northwest Co., crossed the Rocky Mts. and began exploring for new locations to establish posts along the Columbia. He built posts at Kootenai House, Saleesh House, Kullyspell House, and Spokane House. In 1811 he continued down the Columbia to the mouth, but found that an American company, John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Co., had already built Fort Astoria there a year earlier. Because of many disasters, disagreements among themselves, and news that the Americans and the British were at "War," this post only lasted about two years. Most of the men left and the Fort was sold to the Northwest Co. and re-named Fort George.

There was still heavy competition between the Northwest Co. and the Hudson's Bay Co., based in England, which did most of its trapping in Northeast Canada. A trade war broke out between the two companies and eventually resulted in the two companies merging, retaining the name of the latter, the Hudson's Bay Company. This gave them a monopoly of the fur trade in North America extending from Hudsons Bay to the mouth of the Columbia River.

When the "War of 1812" ended, the Americans and the British made an agreement in 1818 to share in the occupation of the Columbia area, called the Oregon Country. The Hudson's Bay Co. decided to re-locate Fort George to an area they called Fort Vancouver, which was located near the mouths of the Willamette and the Cowlitz Rivers, and on which many furs were transported. They built the Fort on the North side of the Columbia, in hopes the British would someday retain all lands North of the River.

INDIANS OF THE NORTHWEST:

In 1824, Dr. John McLoughlin was put in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's fur trading activities of the Northwest, with his headquarters at Fort Vancouver. He was given the title of Chief Factor. When he first came to the area, most of the Indian Tribes were still somewhat hostile. The Fort had to be well guarded at all times. Any Indians entering the Fort had to give up their weapons. Travel on the Columbia was usually in groups of at least sixty well-armed men.

These native Indians along the lower Columbia were mostly "Chinooks." The coastal tribes were usually short and stocky and they did most of their traveling by canoe. They were bow-legged from sitting in canoes or sitting in a squatting position. There wore very little clothing because of the mild climate. They ate mostly dried or smoked fish, nuts, berries and hunted for game.

The Indians of the upper Columbia or plateau regions were somewhat taller, traveled mostly by horseback, and wore more clothing because of the colder climate in winter. They ate similar foods, but had to better prepare it for winter use. They moved about more and lived mainly in tepees, whereas the coastal Indians normally lived in large rectangular lodges. The coastal Indian tribes also used slaves, which they captured from other tribes.

The Indians of the Northwest spoke numerous distinct languages and dialects. To better facilitate trading, they developed the "Chinook Jargon" which was made up of mostly Chinook and Nootka words, but soon added some French and English words. Their native religion was "animism" in which they believed everything in nature-trees, stones, streams, etc., had a spirit. The plateau Indians usually buried their dead in the ground, but the coastal Indians put the body above ground in a canoe which was sometimes hung in a tree. Later, in 1840, Fr. Blanchet would describe the native inhabitants as follows:

"The natives that live in the neighborhood (The Cowlitz) have a language of their own which does not resemble the Chinook, but as a rule they understand the jargon. They are rather numerous, but are very poor. They give the missionaries great hope. They keep saying to the Canadians of Cowlitz, 'The priests are going to come to us too!' "

In his dealings with the Indians, for the twenty-two years he was Chief Factor, Dr. McLoughlin gradually earned their respect, and in turn, they learned they could trust his word. Consequently, there were no Indian wars in the area during his stay there. Also, travel became much safer. There was an established Indian population of approximately 50,000 among the 28 forts established in the Northwest. Counting the employees and their families in and around Fort Vancouver, there were between 500-700.

SIMON BONAPARTE PLAMONDON

When some of the Hudson's Bay Co. employees began to retire, they decided to remain in this great land and began looking for fertile ground where they could farm and settle down and raise families. Most of them took Indian wives. Two important settlements were established, one in the Willamette Valley and the other on Cowlitz Prairie.

One of these Hudson's Bay Co. employees was Simon Bonaparte Plamondon, a Canadian from the province of Quebec, who had worked for the Company first as a "voyageur," one who paddled the large batteaux, or canoes, up and down the treacherous waterways of the fur industry. He later worked as a carpenter, helping to build Company buildings, forts, etc. He was also well skilled in dealing with the Indians. As for St. Francis Xavier Mission, he was probably the one person most responsible for the settling of Cowlitz Prairie.

In 1827, he had been sent with a party of men North to build Fort Langley. Chief Schaneewah, chief of the Cowlitz tribe and several other tribes, and his family accompanied the party to the fort. At some time prior to or during this trip, Simon took one of Schaneewah's daughters, Veronica, as his common-law wife. In 1828, Schaneewah and the rest of his family were killed by a rival chief while returning to Cowlitz.

Simon and his wife remained at Fort Langley about three years. His eldest daughter Sophie was born there in 1830. Shortly thereafter, he and his family returned to Fort Vancouver, but undoubtedly spent some time among the Cowlitz tribe, as they knew him well.

The "ague" probably influenza, struck the Indians of the Columbia region between 1829-1832. They seemed to be more susceptible as they probably hadn't built up the immunities to these diseases. By some estimates, 30,000 died in the Willamette and Columbia valleys alone. A description of the devastation by Simon himself graphically depicts the scene.

"The living sufficed, not to bury their dead, but fled in terror to the sea coast, abandoning the dead and dying to the birds and beasts of prey"

Simon was sent, in 1834 to help build Fort Nisqually. He and his family were there about six months and during this time his wife became ill. It has been assumed that this was due to the birth of their fourth child, Marie Anne, in April. His wife died later that year, probably on their return trip to Cowlitz.

During the next two years, Simon worked as a messenger between Forts Vancouver and Nisqually. In 1835 he met and married Emilie Finlay Bercier, the widow of Pierre Bercier, and the mother of seven children. In 1836, Simon and Emilie had their first child, Lina (Elinore).

Finally in 1837, Simon decided to retire from the Hudson's Bay Co. He staked out a claim of 640 acres on Cowlitz Prairie and, with his family and a friend, Mr. Fagnant, settled there and began to farm.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR PRIESTS:

As the Hudson Bay Co. prospered in the Northwest, more and more people were drawn to the area. At first they hoped to share in the wealth of the fur trading industry, but they gradually became aware of the agricultural potential of the fertile valleys and began to settle there and reap the harvests. Once they were settled, they soon realized they longed for the spiritual rewards of the religion that was so prevalent in their lives many years before.

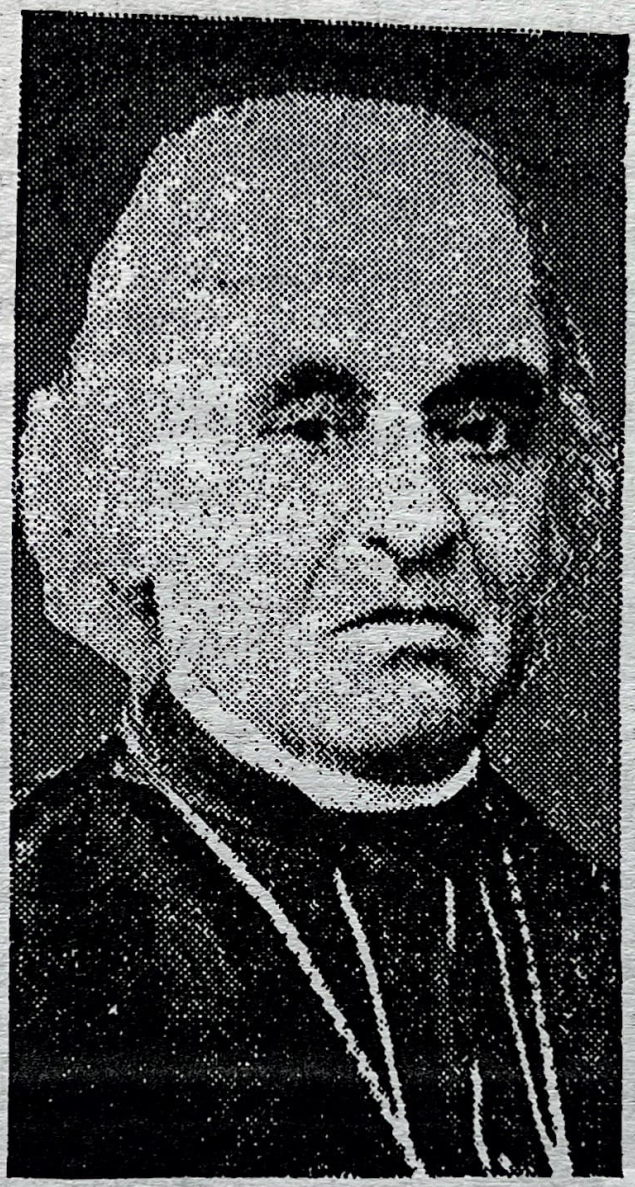
Throughout this early period of settlement in the Northwest, several attempts had been made to bring priests to the area. Even the Indians, after hearing about Christianity from the whites, and maybe from hearing someone read from the Bible, became interested in the white man's religion. Written petitions for priests to come had been sent as early as 1821. No less than three delegations of Indians had been sent to St. Louis with petitions, and by 1836 at least two more written petitions had been received in Red River from the settlers, at the suggestion of Dr. McLoughlin. Although no factual account has been found, some stories indicate that even Simon Plamondon himself journeyed East some 2,000 miles to secure priests for the area. In 1836, the settlers in the Willamette Valley had built a log church in anticipation of the arrival of priests in their valley.

The first missionaries to come were not Catholic. They were Methodist missionaries who were to establish missions among the Indians.

THEIR PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED:

Bishop Provencher of Red River had relayed the settlers plea for priests on to Joseph Signay, Bishop of Quebec. He in turn contacted Gov. George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Co. in England, for permission to transport two priests to the Northwest by a brigade of the Company's canoes and guides. At first this idea was not well received because they felt it would bring more Americans into an area that was jointly occupied by British and Americans.

In March, 1838, the Bishop of Quebec finally received a letter from Simpson stating that the Hudson Bay Co. would



FR. FRANCIS NORBERT BLANCHET

supply the priests' transportation, provided they establish their mission north of the Columbia along the river Cowlitz, where the British expected to retain control.

The Bishop of Quebec had previously made his choice of priests to send; Fr. Francois Norbert Blanchet, who was presently ministering at the village of Cedars near Montreal, and Fr. Modeste Demers, who had been sent to the Red River Mission the year before. Fr. Blanchet was born Sept. 4, 1795, near Montreal, was ordained to the priesthood July 19, 1819, and spent seven years among the Micmac Indians around Miramichi Bay. He was then sent to Cedars for the next nine years. Fr. Demers was born at St. Nicholas, Quebec, Oct. 11, 1809, was ordained Feb. 7, 1837 and during his first year as a priest, was sent to the Red River Mission. Undoubtedly, Bishop Signay felt that God had prepared these two priests for a mission of this magnitude by their past experiences.

THE JOURNEY WESTWARD:

On March 31, 1838, Bishop Signay wrote to Fr. Blanchet announcing the plans had been made for him to leave from Montreal soon after April 25. On May 3, 1838, Fr. Blanchet, joined by a young priest, Joseph Mayrand, departed from Lachine, just East of Montreal, with a brigade of Hudson's Bay Co. canoes filled with men and supplies. They traveled up the Ottawa River nearly 400 miles, into the Mattawan, across Lake Nipissing, down the French River to Lake Huron, and on to Sault Ste. Marie by May 16th. Then they crossed along the North shore of Lake Superior to Fort William, up the Tiministigouia River,and across lands and streams to Fort Francis on Rainy Lake. From Ft. Francis they descended the Riviere La Pluie, across Lac des Bois, followed the Winnipeg River, and down the Red River to Ft. Garry at the Red River Settlement, arriving there on June 6th. There they met Bishop Provencher and Fr. Demers. They remained there until July 10th, performing missionary work and preparing for the next leg of their journey.

Upon their departure, Fr. Demers joined the group, leaving Fr. Mayrand at the Red River Mission, following the instructions Bishop Signay had given them. The group now headed North across Lake Winnipeg to Norway House, then West along the Saskatchewan River to Ft. Constant, then on to Ft. Cumberland, and on to Ft. Carleton, then to Ft. Pitt,

FR. MODESTE DEMERS

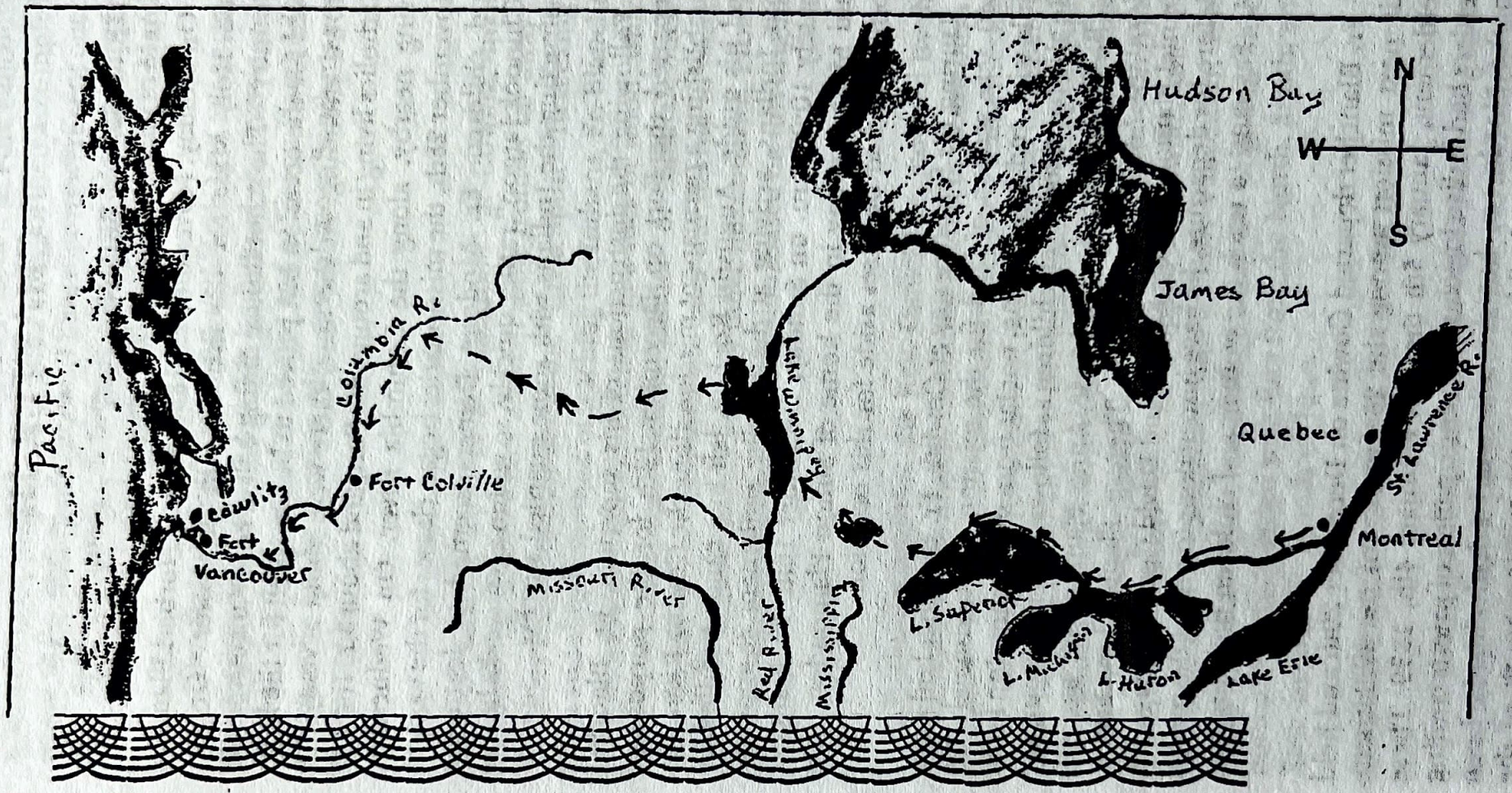
reaching Ft. Edmondton on Sept. 6th. They departed there on Sept. 10th with a 66 horse caravan overland to Ft. Assiniboine on the Athabasca River. On Sept. 16th, they began the ascent of the Athabasca R., first sighting the Rocky Mts. on Sept. 28th. They reached Jasper House on Oct.2nd, leaving there on Oct. 5th with a 72 horse caravan and reached the summit of the Rocky Mts., between Mt. Hooker and Mt. Brown, at 3:00 AM on the morning of Oct. 10th.

The missionaries were now in the "Oregon Country", but still had a long and treacherous journey ahead. They could see the headwaters of the Columbia and they reached a canoe camp there on Oct. 13th. The two canoes awaiting them were not sufficient to carry the whole caravan at once, so an advance party including the two priests, continued on to House of the Lakes. From there, one of the canoes was sent back for the rest of the party. Finally, on Oct. 24th, the canoe returned with the tragic news. On the return trip, the canoe had overturned and twelve of the twenty-six occupants had drowned. The only bodies recovered were those of three children. While mourning the loss of their friends, the missionaries remained at "House of the Lakes" for eighteen days, instructing the Indians and baptizing their children. Finally, they departed and three days later arrived at Fort Colville. Word had spread that they were coming, and the Chiefs of five Indian tribes, along with some H.B.C. officers, greeted them there on Nov. 6th. By Nov. 11th, they were once again in their canoes, stopping at Fort Okanogan overnight. Then they went on to Fort Walla-Walla, arriving there on the 18th. The next day began the final leg of their journey.

The first sign of their arrival was announced when, on the afternoon of Saturday, Nov. 24, 1838, a watchman at Fort Vancouver saw several tiny dark specks upriver and soon hollered "Brigade". By the time the canoes reached the shore, it was lined with a huge crowd of people, shouting welcomes over the noise of the singing of the boatmen. James Douglas, acting Chief Factor in the absence of Dr. McLoughlin, gave the formal greeting to the priests. They were then escorted to a room reserved for them and given a servant to attend to their immediate needs.

The journey from Montreal to Fort Vancouver, which zigzagged across southern Canada, was over 5,000 miles long and including the few days set aside for rest, lasted almost seven months. Now that their journey was over, they soon would have to face the difficult tasks that lay ahead.

ROUTE TAKEN BY EARLY MISSIONARIES



CHAPTER III

THE MISSION BEGINS:

On Sunday, November 25, 1838, Francis Norbert Blanchet said Holy Mass for the first time in the lower "Oregon Country". The schoolhouse dining hall at Fort Vancouver was used for the occasion but proved to be too small for the large crowd attending. At the time, there were about seventy-five Catholics living in and around the Fort, and about 300 Indians living nearby, along the Columbia River. On Wednesday, November 28th, the missionaries began classes for the women and children. Fr. Modeste Demers seemed to learn the "Chinook Jargon" rather quickly, so within a few weeks he was instructing the Indians with some guarded success.

Following the instructions of his superiors, Fr. Blanchet departed the Fort on December 12th for the purpose of establishing a permanent mission along the Cowlitz River. He and his guide, Augustin Rochon, left in a canoe paddled by four Indians, arriving at the Cowlitz settlement at approximately 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 16th. Fr. Blanchet said Mass that day in the home of Simon Plamondon, in a room that had been set aside for this occasion.

During his four-day stay at Cowlitz, Fr. Blanchet laid out a 640 acre section of land for the mission, approximately 1/2 mile wide and 2 miles long, not far from the Plamondon farm. He also baptized seven children as follows: Helene Latour, age 3; Basile Bercier, age 5; Marie Anne Plamondon, age 4½; Edouard Coutenoir, age 6½; Therese Plamondon, age 6; Daniel Plamondon, age 3 mos.; and David Coutenoir, age 1½. Before his departure, he gave instructions to one of the men, a Mr. Fagnant, to teach the women and children their prayers.

Fr. Blanchet departed Cowlitz on December 20th and held his next mission among the 26 families of the Willamette settlement, January 5th through February 4th, 1839. These settlers had built a log church in anticipation of priests coming to the Northwest, but the missionaries had already been instructed not to build a permanent mission South of the Columbia River.

After this mission, Fr. Blanchet returned to Fort Vancouver where the two priests wrote the first letters of their accomplishments to the Bishop of Quebec. These reports were sent out on the 'Spring Express', a brigade of canoes carrying supplies and trade goods upriver to the various forts, usually in March.

Fr. Blanchet returned to Cowlitz on March 17th to continue his mission there. On April 8th he blessed the marriages of Michel Coutenoir and Marie Ketze and of Simon Plamondon and Emelie Fenlay Bercier. Also, several more baptisms were performed.

Upon hearing word of a "blackrobe" at Cowlitz, many surrounding Indian tribes arrived, some from as far away as Whidbey Island, to hear about the "Great Spirit". In seeking a plain and simple method of teaching the Indians, Fr. Blanchet devised a system that was notched on a stick of wood, which became known as the "Catholic Ladder" or "Shahale Stick". This display of lines and dots was later transferred to parchment and became widely used by other missionaries. Protestant missionaries used a revised version, based on this original idea.

A Methodist minister, the Rev. Daniel Lee, stopped by the Cowlitz Mission in March, indicating his intent to establish a mission at Nesqually. Fr. Blanchet immediately sent a message to Fr. Demers at Fort Vancouver, instructing him to depart at once for Fort Nesqually. Fr. Demers reached there on April 1st, amidst a most joyful greeting from the Indians and whites alike, performing a mission there until his departure on April 30th. On his return trip, he stopped at Cowlitz, and Fr. Blanchet then accompanied him to Fort Vancouver, both being anxious to greet the Hudson's Bay Co. brigades, which normally arrived laden with furs from the North, South, and East, during the month of June.

COWLITZ BEGINS ITS FIRST GROWTH:

Fr. Demers spent this first summer of 1839 returning to the forts along the upper Columbia to minister to the Indians and the handful of Hudson's Bay Co. employees assigned there. Fr. Blanchet returned to Cowlitz on July 20th and found that a crude Chapel, 20'x30', had been erected there. Later it would

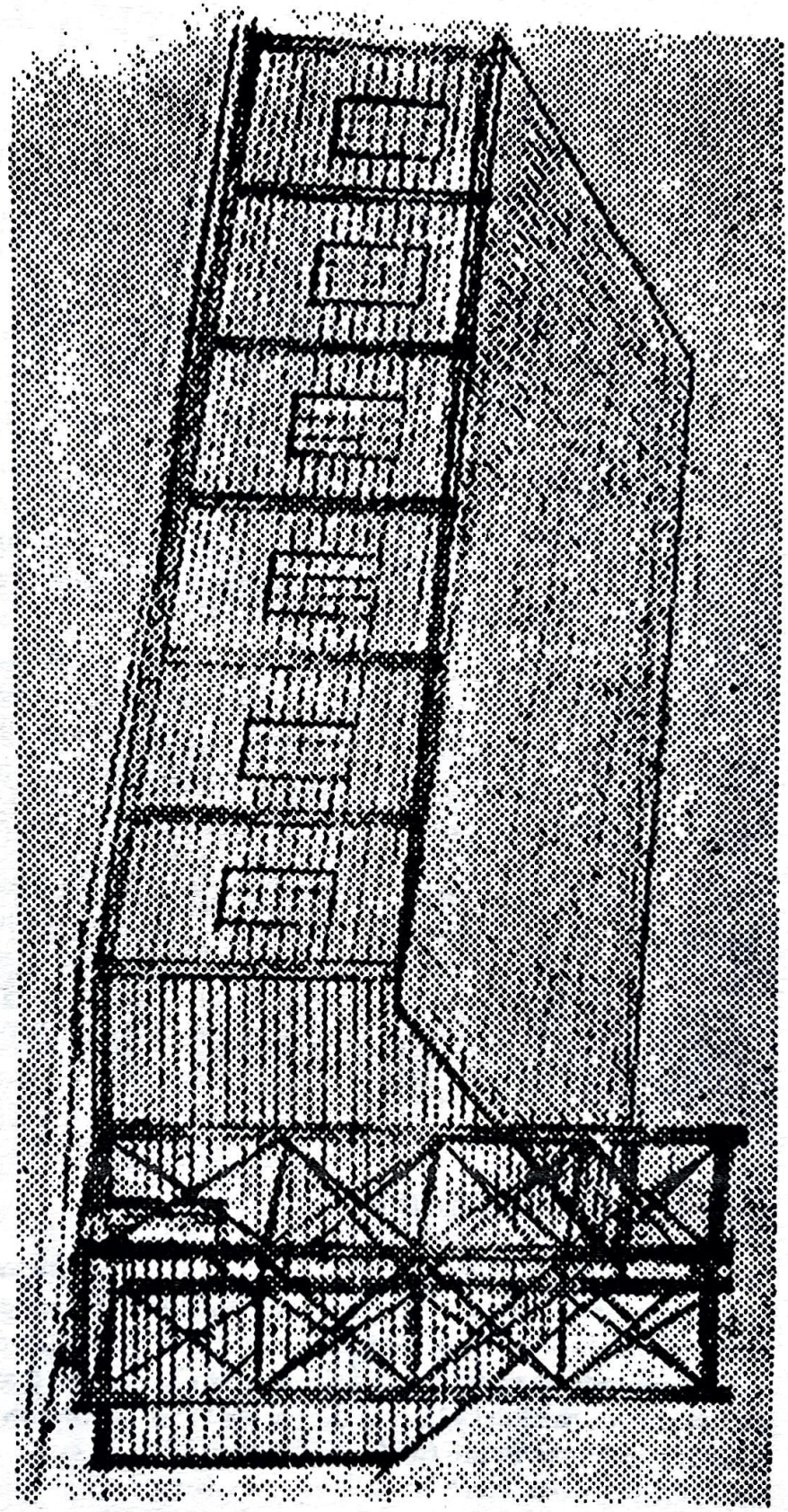
become the missionaries' residence. Mr. Rochon had fenced 24 acres and had plowed another 15 acres ready for planting. Also a barn had been built. The next day, July 21st, Fr. Blanchet said Mass in the Chapel, nicknamed the "Wolf's Head" (because the structure resembled a wolf's head), and dedicated it to St. Francis Xavier. Ten days later, July 31st, he performed the burial of Cecile Rocher, age 20 and wife of Joseph Rocher, apparently the first recorded burial on the Mission land. In August, he went North to visit Nesqually, then returned to Cowlitz on September 14th, at which time he planted and blessed a large wooden cross.

On Sepember 18th, Fr. Blanchet left for Fort Vancouver. Upon his arrival, he began to hear rumors that permission to establish a mission South of the Columbia River was on its way. On October 9th, the rumors proved correct when he received the approval from the Bishop of Quebec. The next day, October 10th, the two priests departed the Fort-Fr. Blanchet heading South to the Willamette settlement, and Fr. Demers traveling North to spend the winter at the Cowlitz settlement.

Fr. Demers reached Cowlitz on October 13th, and the following day blessed a 50 lb. bell, which he had brought with him from Red River, and had it positioned in a wooden tower near the Chapel entrance. He rang the "Angelus" himself for the first time in the Northwest. There were now eight families living at Cowlitz, consisting of 46 people. By Christmas Eve, 1839, to the delight of Fr. Demers, the young men had learned' and joined in song to sing' the "Gloria in Excelsis."

On May 4, 1840, Fr. Blanchet left Willamette again for Fort Vancouver. On this occasion he discovered that two boxes containing some long awaited religious articles, books, ornaments, etc. had arrived by ship for him from Paris. He soon departed for Cowlitz to visit Fr. Demers, distribute some of the supplies, and to plan their summer's work. They spent five days together at Cowlitz. Then on May 14th, Fr. Blanchet went North to Nesqually and Puget Sound, and Fr. Demers went South to the Columbia, then downriver to visit the Chinooks near Ft. George (Astoria).

The two priests met again at Cowlitz in mid-June to find that a new log Chapel, 25'x60' was being built, the old one continuing as a residence.



On June 29, Fr. Demers left again on a mission to Colville. During this mission he was pleased to learn that a Jesuit priest, Fr. DeSmet from St. Louis, was doing some missionary work nearby, among the Flathead tribes, around what is now Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

By Fall, Fr. Demers had returned to Cowlitz again for the Winter. In October, assisted by Fr. Blanchet, he administered First Communion to two boys, four girls, and two women. Also, the settlers were raising the frame of a house, 25'x60', to be used as a public hall and residence which Fr. Demers blessed and began to occupy on November 20, 1840.

In the Spring of 1841, Fr. Blanchet began a series of missions among the many Indian villages bordering the Willamette and Clackamas Rivers. On May 12th, Fr. Demers left Cowlitz to assist him with these missions. During his absence, Lt. Charles Wilkes visited Cowlitz and Simon Plamondon accompanied him on an exploring expedition for the United States, surveying the Cowlitz River and the Columbia to its mouth. Upon their return, Wilkes went to Fort Vancouver, where he met Fr. Blanchet, while Simon returned home. In June, Simon, along with his wife, again joined Wilkes' party as far as Puget Sound, then again returned home to Cowlitz.

Fr. Blanchet spent most of the remaining year dividing his time between the local white settlements, Fort Vancouver, and the surrounding native villages, while Fr. Demers left on a mission North as far as Fort Langley on the Fraser River, departing Cowlitz on August 11th, and returning on September 24th.

APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE:

After the two permanent missions of St. Paul at Willamette and St. Francis Xavier at Cowlitz were established, Fr. Blanchet and Fr. Demers both soon realized that they could not attend to all the needs of the people of this vast area, an area that stretched from the Rocky Mts. to the Pacific Ocean, and from present day Alaska to the California border.

Beginning with the first report sent to the Bishop of Quebec in March, 1839, Fr. Blanchet indicated a need for more help. The Canadians, after having been away from their religion for

so long a time, needed daily guidance. The Indians as well needed a regular schedule of visitation. It must have been extremely difficult for the missionaries to have to depart from each fort or Indian village only after a few days, or maybe three or four weeks, knowing that it would probably be several months, if not a year, before they could return to continue their teaching.

For more priests to be sent into the Columbia area by the Hudson Bay Co. fur brigades, permission had to be obtained from the Company Governor and Committee in England. This was difficult because the primary concern of the Company was to increase their profits by the fur trade, not the advancement of Catholicism.

Sir George Simpson was the Governor of the Hudson Bay Co. activities in the Northwest. During the year of 1840, Bishop Signay of Quebec sent several appeals to Simpson in England as did Fr. Blanchet. Governor Simpson began a tour around the world in 1841-42. As part of this trip, he planned to visit the Columbia territory and assess their situation.

Bishop Signay, in the meantime, was exploring other possibilities. He considered an appeal to the Holy See in Rome, to have the jurisdiction of the Northwest placed under the Bishop of St. Louis, who could draw on a supply of European priests. Bishop Signay did become successful in arranging for the transportation of two Canadian priests on an American ship, "Douglas" leaving Boston Harbor in September 1841. This ship traveled around Cape Horn to Valparaiso, Chile; then to Tahiti, then North to the Sandwich Islands, (Hawaii). These two priests, Fr. Anthony Langlois and Fr. John Baptist Zachary Bolduc, had to remain there until a ship left for the Columbia.

Upon the arrival of Governor Simpson to Fort Vancouver, on November 17, 1841, Fr. Blanchet gave him a memorandum of their accomplishments in the Northwest. Also, Dr. McLoughlin gave Simpson a favorable report of the two priests' work. Thus, Governor Simpson approved passage of some priests and religious workers, ten people in all, in the Spring canoes of 1843. Ironically, Bishop Signay was unable to find any experienced recruits that he could send, since he was already so short of priests. Fr. Blanchet had hoped that his brother, Augustine, who had just recently been ordained, could be sent, but the Bishop of Montreal would not release him.

Another event was taking place about this time, of which Fr. Blanchet was unaware. Fr. DeSmet had successfully appealed to the Bishop of St. Louis for help in establishing a mission among the Flatheads. He departed St. Louis in April, 1841, with Fr. Gregory Mengarini, Fr. Nicholas Point, and Brothers Charles Huet, William Claessens and Joseph Specht. They arrived at a camp on the Bitter Root River on September 4, 1841, and set up St. Mary's Mission among the Flatheads.

In the Spring of 1842 their provisions were running low, so Fr. DeSmet left for Ft. Vancouver to replenish their supplies. Upon his arrival there on June 8th, he met Fr. Blanchet and Fr. Demers for the first time, which was a very joyous and emotional occasion for the three priests.

During the few days that Fr. DeSmet was at the Fort, they all met with Dr. McLoughlin and agreed to a plan in which Fr. DeSmet, after having obtained some money and recruits from Europe, would return to establish a headquarters for Jesuit missions in the Willamette Valley. This plan was not begun until Fr. DeSmet returned from Europe in 1844.

On June 30, 1842, Fr. Demers left Fort Vancouver in a brigade of canoes, commanded by Peter Skene Ogden, for a mission to New Caledonia, (now eastern British Columbia), while Fr. DeSmet, after taking supplies back to his St. Mary's mission, left for Europe.

Fr. Demers' extended mission prevented him from returning to the area until April 13, 1843, leaving Fr. Blanchet to continue the missionary work in the Columbia region by himself. He returned to Cowlitz to again perform a mission there on August 18th, at which time he reported in his journal, a population of 13 families, consisting of 60 people.

In the meantime, Fr. Langlois and Fr. Bolduc had finally found passage from the Sandwich Islands on the ship "Cowlitz", arriving at Fort Vancouver on September 15, 1842. At the Fort they learned that Fr. Blanchet had recently returned from Cowlitz and had gone on to St. Paul. They immediately departed for St. Paul and arrived there to go greet him on September 17th. This was an especially happy occasion for Fr. Blanchet, since he apparently would now have the assistance he had been trying to obtain for so many months.

CHAPTER IV

ECCLESIASTICAL ORGANIZATION BEGINS:

After a few days of rest and rejoicing, upon the arrival of Fr. Bolduc and Fr. Langlois to the Oregon Country, Fr. Blanchet gave them their assignments; Fr. Langlois was to minister to St. Paul in the Willamette Valley, and Fr. Bolduc to St. Francis Xavier Mission on Cowlitz Prairie. Fr. Blanchet then returned to Fort Vancouver where he was successful in bringing Dr. John McLoughlin back into the Catholic religion. About this time, Dr. McLoughlin was in the process of surveying his property across the river from the Fort and laid it out into "blocks" for sale, which soon became the City of Oregon, (Oregon City).

Fr. Bolduc arrived at Cowlitz on October 30, 1842, and spent the Winter there. In one of his journals he writes about an eruption of Mt. St. Helens; "beginning about 3:00 p.m. on December 5, 1842, and continuing for several days, killing all the fish in a small river whose waters empty into the Cowlitz", (undoubtedly, the Toutle River).

After permission was granted by Fr. Blanchet, Fr. Bolduc left Cowlitz on March 7, 1843, with James Douglas of the Hudson Bay Co., and a party of 22 men to establish Fort Victoria on Vancouver Island. During his stay there, Fr. Bolduc crossed the bay and visited the Indians on Whidbey Island. After his return to Cowlitz, he requested to be assigned to Whidbey Island in order to establish a mission there. In the meantime, Fr. Demers had returned from New Caledonia. After a few weeks rest, Fr. Demers accompanied Fr. Bolduc to Whidbey Island, departing on May 10th. Fr. Blanchet then sent Fr. Langlois to Cowlitz. Upon his arrival, he began working towards completion of the new log church that had been started in the Summer of 1840. He finished the church in time for Mass on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 1843.

The attempt at establishing a permanent mission on Whidbey Island turned out to be a failure for many reasons. Within a few weeks, Fr. Demers and Fr. Bolduc had returned, Fr. Demers staying at Cowlitz for the Summer, Fr. Blanchet then began a boys "college" at St. Paul, designed to teach boys, ages 6-12, how to read and write in both French and English. It was

During Archbishop Blanchet's absence, the British and the U.S. had signed an agreement, establishing the border between Canada and the U.S. at the 49th parallel. Also, the Oregon settlers had formed a provisional government. Civilization in the Oregon Country was gradually becoming more apparent, but many more problems still lay ahead, as people were pouring into the area by the thousands. Most of these were Americans entering the Willamette Valley, but a handful had begun to settle North of the Columbia. John R. Jackson was one of the first of these Americans who, in 1845, settled on Jackson Prairie, just North of the Canadian settlement of Cowlitz Prairie, where his small log house served, for a time, as Courthouse, Sheriff's Office, and Community meeting hall. It remains there today.

FUTURE DIMS FOR MISSIONARIES:

Two Methodist missions were still prospering East of the Cascades in 1847. One of these was the Whitman Mission near Walla-Walla, now the center of A. Blanchet's Diocese. The other one was located to the Northwest, manned by a Mr. Spalding. The Indians were displeased with the great influx of white men into their lands.

When a measles epidemic broke out among the Cayuse Indians, they put most of the blame on the Walla-Walla Mission and attacked the Whitman Mission, killing Dr. Whitman, his wife, and many others, in a brutal massacre on November 29, 1847. This set off a series of Indian wars which lasted for the next fifteen years or so in the Northwest. Also, about this time, Dr. John McLoughlin, who had been instrumental in keeping the Indians at peace, decided to retire from his post at Fort Vancouver.

Fr. Brouillet, Bishop A. Blanchet's assistant at Walla-Walla, was instrumental in helping Mr. Spalding escape to the West to avoid being murdered by the Indians, but as soon as he was in safe territory he began to spread rumors that the massacre at the Whitman Mission was the fault of the Catholics. For a time, many threats were made against Catholics. There were even rumors that all the Catholic churches would be burned, but nothing ever came of it. About this same time, a ship, the "Vancouver", loaded with Catholic missionary supplies, wrecked and sank at the mouth of the Columbia and all was lost. Then gold was discovered in California, in 1849, and thousands of people vacated the Northwest, leaving empty schools, churches and missions.

The people at Cowlitz were not affected as much as other areas by Indian upraisings. One reason was that the Cowlitz Indians and the Canadian settlers had normally gotten along well with each other, and many of these early settlers, Simon Plamondon included, had taken Indian wives. Simon's farm seemed to be prospering well. He sold wheat and potatoes, had built a sawmill and was selling lumber, was running a blacksmith's shop, and had even built the first brick kiln in the Northwest. Sometime in the mid-1840's, his wife Emilie had passed away. Within a short time he had met and married a niece of Archbishop Blanchet, Henriette (Harriet) Pelletier, at St. Paul, on July 10, 1848. Eventually, Simon did build a "Blockhouse" on his property, with the help of some local Indians, to provide protection for the settlers in case of a hostile Indian attack.

Even though many people had left for California, by 1850, many Americans were starting to migrate North of the Columbia, between Fort Vancouver and Puget Sound. Along with the migration came an epidemic of measles which caused the death of many Indians. Gradually, the white population, North of the Columbia, increased to a point where the people felt a need for their own central government. One of the first meetings held among the settlers north of the Columbia to discuss a territorial government of their own, was at Cowlitz Landing, just south of the present town of Toledo, in August, 1851.

During this time, Archbishop Blanchet was in Mexico on a much needed fund raising drive, in which he did become mildly successful. On May 31, 1850, a new diocese of Nisqually was formed, abandoning the diocese of Walla-Walla for the present because of the Indian uprisings in that area. Bishop A. Blanchet took over the new Nisqually diocese, establishing his headquarters at Fort Vancouver. He was desperately in need of help, so he left for Montreal in search of recruits. He returned to the Northwest with 5 nuns, but upon seeing Oregon City, which appeared like a ghost town at the time, all made their departure for California within two months.

In 1850, Fr. Pretot, who had come to the Northwest with Archbishop Blanchet's group from Europe in 1847, was residing at Cowlitz, but on August 9, 1851, Fr. LeClaire took over the duties. This was the same month that the meeting at Cowlitz Landing was called to discuss Territorial Government. At the meeting, a petition to Congress was drawn up, and Simon Plamondon was one of the 26 people who signed it. Finally, in February and March of 1853, the House and Senate passed a bill, and the President signed it on March 2, 1853, creating the Washington Territory.

In 1855, Simon Plamondon was appointed Indian Agent for the Cowlitz and Klickitat tribes. One of his first duties was to remove the rifles from the Indians, many of whom were his friends. Not long afterwards, he was ordered to round up their horses and remove them too. Also, the Indians were not allowed any alcoholic beverages, but Simon himself would occasionally join them in a friendly drink. The Territorial officials were not pleased with his bookkeeping system either, but, ironically, the priests at the Cowlitz Mission were doing his bookkeeping, since he could neither read nor write, although this was done in French. Ed Warbass, the local military leader, and Simon often had disagreements over Simon's acts of sympathy and kindness towards the local Indians. On August 13, 1856, Simon was removed from the office of local Indian Agent. By 1858, Simon and his wife Harriet, by now had 3 children of their own, but for some reason they separated shortly thereafter, and she moved near her relatives in Oregon.

Another event, which probably saddened the hearts of many of these early settlers, was the death of Dr. John McLoughlin on September 3, 1857, who had always given assistance to anyone in need.

BEGINNING OF A SLOW RECOVERY:

In 1857, Bishop A. Blanchet, leaving Fr. Brouillet as his Vicar General, departed for Montreal again to seek help for his diocese. This time he succeeded in recruiting 5 nuns and a priest by the name of Fr. Louis Rossi. They traveled by ship to Panama, then were transported across the Isthmus by rail, then again boarded a ship to San Francisco, then sailed on to Oregon, reaching Vancouver on December 8, 1857. Within two months, a convent was built, and by April of 1858, the Sisters opened a school for girls. Their Superior was Mother Joseph, and this was the beginning of the Sisters of Providence in the Northwest. Soon after, in 1859, Archbishop F. Blanchet also made a trip to Montreal, and returned with 16 sisters, 12 of whom began St. Mary's Academy in Portland.

By 1860, most of the Indian uprisings had ceased and treaties had been signed. As for St. Francis Mission at Cowlitz, very little is known about its history beyond this point until more recent times, because of three separate fires that, at one time or another, destroyed all valuable information, journals of attending priests, cemetery records, and etc., that were stored at the Mission. A few bits and pieces of information from outside sources have been obtained from time to time.

We do know that 13 years after the arrival of Fr. LeClaire to Cowlitz, Fr. Charles Richards took over as pastor in 1864. He apparently saw the need of a school in the area, for soon after his arrival, he built a small two-story day school and hired a secular teacher. By 1868, he had started the construction of a Sisters Convent and boarding school, but the building still had not been completed when he left in 1873. During his attendance at Cowlitz, word was received that one of its early founders, Bishop Modeste Demers, had died on July 28, 1871, at Victoria, and his secretary, Charles John Seghers, became his successor. Bishop Demers had spent most of his life in the then primitive Northwest.

When Fr. Richards left Cowlitz, Fr. Peter Hylebos, a Belgian priest, continued his work on the convent. He soon had it ready for occupancy, and recruited three Sisters of Providence to take up residency there on September 12, 1876. These three Sisters began their teaching at the District School for the first few years, but in 1880, they opened the boarding school with 9 boarders and 8 orphans. The attendance gradually increased until 1892, at which time they had over 50 boarders, but after that, the number began to decrease.

In 1874, construction began on a new church, the old log church being no longer suitable for occupancy after approximately 35 years of existence. In 1879, it was time for Fr. Hylebos to be transferred again, so Fr. Emil Kauten came to take over his duties. During his eleven years at Cowlitz, he was instrumental in getting the school and church started in Chehalis. Shortly after his arrival, Bishop M. Blanchet retired from his Diocese of Nisqually, which included Cowlitz, and Fr. Aegidius Junger took over as its bishop on August 28, 1879. About a year later, Archbishop F. N. Blanchet, the founder of Cowlitz Mission, officially retired from his Diocese of Oregon City. Three years later, on Monday, June 18, 1883, the Archbishop died at his residence in Portland, at the age of 88. His body was then taken to St Paul, Oregon, to be buried. Bishop Seghers of Vancouver Island was then appointed to his diocese, and became Archbishop Seghers.

On February 25, 1887, the last of the three pioneer bishops, Bishop Augustin M. Blanchet, died at the age of 90, at Vancouver, Territory of Washington. He was buried beneath the floor of the sanctuary there, at St. James Cathedral. In 1889, the year prior to Fr. Kauten's departure from Cowlitz, the Washington Territory became the State of Washington.

EXPERIENCING MORE SETBACKS:

In 1890, Fr. Nicholas Frei, a Benedictine priest, who originally came from Switzerland, and had arrived in Portland in August, 1881, was assigned to Cowlitz, allowing Fr. Kauten to depart for another assignment. About this time, there was another great influx of people into the Northwest, partly due to the favorable land grant laws, and the railroads had finally reached into this area. Also, the people felt better protected by laws, since they now had a State Constitution.

Many new churches were built during this period, all over the State, including the area around Cowlitz. This caused a much heavier workload on the priest at Cowlitz Mission, since he had to minister to so many different stations, and these had to be reached on horseback in all kinds of weather.

The Sisters of Providence, at the Mission Convent and school, had been in a state of poverty for some time, and were in dire need of financial help. Now faced with the problems of the absence of a priest for long periods of time, they finally were forced to close the school, and departed the Convent on October 6, 1898, after 22 years of continuous service.

Just two years prior to this, the head of the diocese, Bishop Junger had died on the 26th of December, following a long illness. In June, 1896, Fr. Edward John O'Dea was appointed Bishop of Nesqually, and was consecrated in Vancouver on September 8, 1896. Also that year, the Cowlitz River flooded, submerging some of the early settlements around nearby Cowlitz Landing. Then in 1900, Simon Plamondon, the man probably most responsible for the settlement on Cowlitz Prairie, died at the age of 100.

Fr. Nicholas Frei had become well accustomed to Cowlitz by the turn of the century, but in January, 1901, after having served 11 years there, was called away to Uniontown, near Pullman, Washington and Fr. Peter Van Holderbeke was sent to Cowlitz. On January 1, 1901, only two days after his arrival, the St. Francis Mission Church and rectory burned to the ground, destroying all the valuable church records and furnishings. In an attempt to save some of the records, Fr. Holderbeke quickly re-entered the burning church but was soon forced back outside by extensive burns and injuries he had sustained. Some local parishioners found him kneeling in the snow, his body badly blistered. They immediately transported him by sled to the nearest hospital, a journey which took over two hours, but shortly after his arrival, he died as a result of his injuries.

During the fire, one of the parshioners had summoned the nearby community by ringing the church bell, but it was too late. Nothing could be saved. It was speculated that a candle had been mistakenly left burning, probably due to the fatigue of the new priest, caused by his recent travels. The Catholic community of Cowlitz was now left with neither school nor church.

CHAPTER V

A NEW BEGINNING:

The early parishioners of St. Francis Mission soon recovered from their many losses and began the new century by building a new church on the same spot as the old one. Fr. William Palmer was then sent to the Mission as pastor, and assisted in the completion of this church. Since there was no rectory for the new pastor, he resided in the vacant school building, at times receiving his meals from the nearby parshioners. At some time during his three year term at Cowlitz, a two-story house was moved to a plot of land across the Spencer Rd. and below the cemetery, to be used as a temporary priest's residence. Fr. Palmer also had churches erected in Vader, Winlock and Castle Rock.

In 1904, Fr. P.A. Flavin was sent to replace Fr. Palmer. Fr. Flavin had a new rectory built behind the new mission church. Also, the original Mission Land Claim of 640 acres was divided into plots and many of these began to be sold to nearby residents during this time, although a few parcels of land had been sold as early as 1865. Undoubtedly the purpose of this was to try to raise some much needed funds for the Mission, and quite possibly, to attract more people to the area.

The vast area that the priests had to minister to still remained a problem. Bishop John O'Dea had recently moved his residence from Vancouver to Seattle in order to be more centrally located in his diocese. Being made aware of the problem at Cowlitz, he attempted to resolve it by placing the Mission under the care of a religious order. In 1906, he sent the Theatine Fathers from Italy to occupy the Mission, but apparently the difficulties they faced were too much to bear, so in 1908, they withdrew from Cowlitz.

The Franciscans of St. Louis Province, whose Order was mostly associated with the California missions, began to enter Oregon in 1906. In 1908, Bishop O'Dea invited them to take over the duties at St. Francis Xavier's at Cowlitz. In the Fall of

1908, they responded by the arrival of the first Franciscan priest, Fr. Ewald Soland, who began his duties as pastor. Then soon afterward an assistant, Fr. Capistran Damek, arrived and together they began the construction of churches at Kelso, Kalama, Woodland, Cathlamet, and Harmony, and restored churches at St. Urban and Napavine.

During the time of these early Franciscans, the men of the parish helped to install a water pump below the Mission, near the Cowlitz River, which became known as the "Ram". They built a wooden water tower behind the rectory, then laid a wooden trunk line from the "Ram" to supply the water needs of the Mission and nearby residents. The old water tower was eventually torn down and a well was drilled, but the "Ram" can still provide water to the Mission today, if necessary.

Fr. Soland and Fr. Damek were replaced after two years by Fr. Clement Moorman and Fr. George Wehmeyer, who were there less than a year. In 1911, Fr. Aegidius Herkenrath and Fr. Clement Berberich arrived and were soon joined by Fr. Valentine Dorenkemper, Fr. Thomas Ziegan and Fr. Francis Redman. This was the largest group of priests that had ever resided at St. Francis Mission at one time. The numerous churches, and sometimes logging camps long since forgotten, that the priests attended to were called "stations", since no priest resided there. A Mass was provided every Sunday, whenever possible, at each of these stations, which at that time had to be reached on horseback.

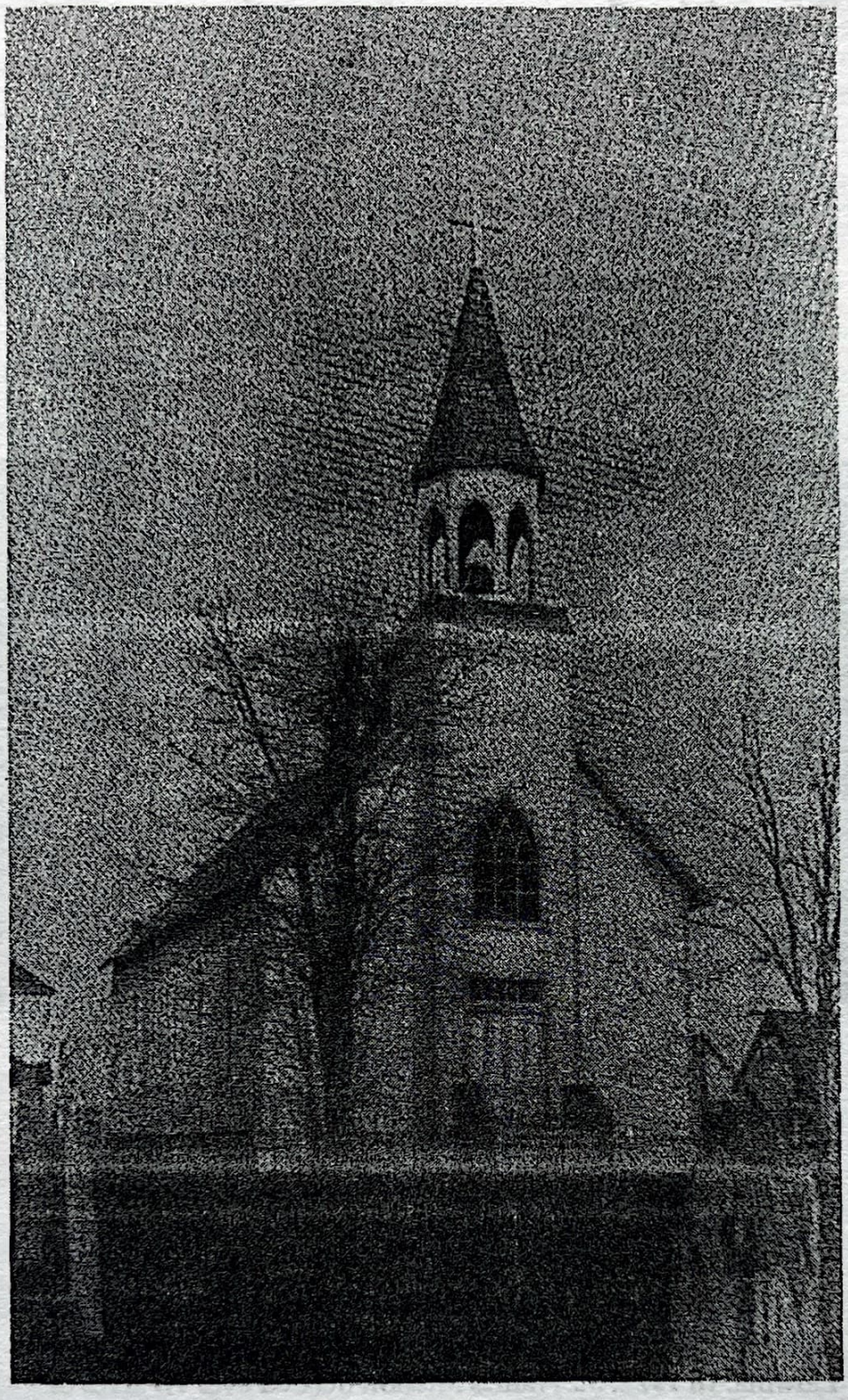
On the approval of Bishop O'Dea, Fr. Aegidius, shortly after his arrival in 1911, made a request to Mother Leonarda at Stella Niagara, N.Y. for the Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Christian Charity to re-open the Mission School. In preparation of their arrival, Fr. Aegidius had a wing added to the East end of the Convent and did some renovation work on the old building. On August 24, 1911, Mother Angela, along with Sisters Adelaide, Syncletia, and Assisia, arrived at Cowlitz and within a short time had re-opened the school, beginning the first year with 11 "boarders" and approximately 40 "day pupils". The first 8th grade graduates included the names John Sareault, William Raupp, Hector Sareault, Anna Bonnin, Mary Ecker, and Ruby Dubeau. By the third year, St. Mary's Convent School had an enrollment of over 90 students.

About 1913, a transient, Martin Schweiberer, presumably a German sailor who had jumped ship, came by St. Francis Mission looking for work. Fr. Aegidius took him in, fed him, and invited him to stay. Martin chose a small room in the basement of the rectory for his place of abode and slept on a board laid on the floor. Since the Mission was a self supporting farm, Martin found many chores he could do. He was an excellent blacksmith and made many of the tools used at the Mission. He also cut wood for the stoves, worked in the fields, fed the horses, and dug the graves in the cemetery. He accepted no pay for his work, just room and board. He became a very devout Christian and in later years, became a Tertiary Brother in the Franciscan Order. He left Cowlitz for a time, but later returned and his life ended there on August 28, 1954, after having displayed for over 40 years an excellent example of St. Francis himself. He is buried in the Friar's section of the St. Francis Xavier Cemetery.

ANOTHER DISASTROUS FIRE:

In just a few short years, the Franciscans had substantially improved conditions at Cowlitz. In 1915, Fr. Aegidius had to leave and Fr. Victor Aertker became pastor for a few months. Then in 1916, Fr. Maximilian Klein arrived and was installed as pastor.

On August 16, 1916, a fire broke out in the rectory. For some reason the water supply had practically been depleted, and as a result of a lack of water, the flames soon spread into the church. Within a short time the wood frame church and rectory were once again completely destroyed. What a great sense of disappointment the priests and parishioners must have felt at that time. But faith in God prevailed, and by late Fall a new brick church was being built on the same location. A recreation room at St. Mary's School was used temporarily for Sunday Mass throughout the Winter of 1916-17. After building funds became depleted, various fund raising projects took place. Finally, five dedicated members of the parish donated their time and labor in the finishing of the inside of the church. This new church was dedicated on Sunday, March 25, 1917, by Bishop O'Dea of Seattle, and the sermon was given by Archbishop Christie of Portland. Eventually, the rectory was also rebuilt. In the midst of all their grief, the parishioners also, undoubtedly, had their minds on events taking place in



BURNED IN 1916

Europe, since the First World War broke out about this time, and many young men would be called away to serve their country.

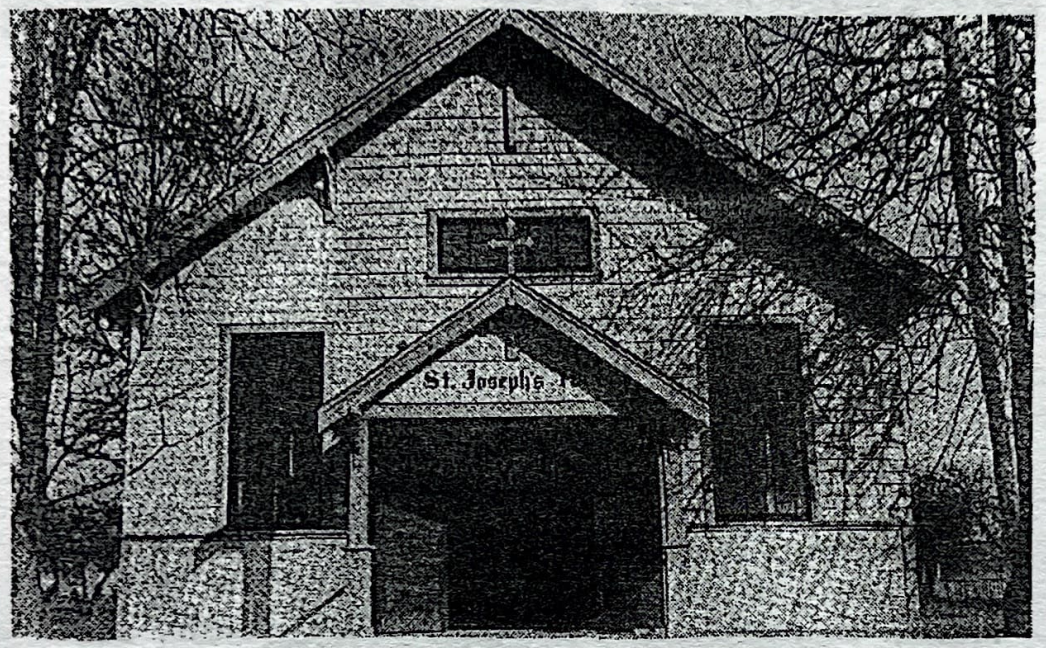
GROWTH AT COWLITZ CONTINUES:

Later that year, Fr. Klein departed Cowlitz and Fr. Felician Leibeling arrived as pastor. Many other Franciscans, too numerous to mention here, were coming and going at Cowlitz during this time also. As assistants, they traveled to the many "stations" of the area, but had their permanent residence at St. Francis Mission. Usually one of them had the task of teaching religion classes at St. Mary's School. Also, many Franciscan Brothers were assigned to the Mission from time to time. They were very dedicated to serving in a variety of ways; religious education, teaching altar boys, cooking, cleaning, caring for the farm animals, gardening, etc. A list of priests and brothers formerly assigned to Cowlitz, although somewhat incomplete, is included as appendix "A"

In 1921, Fr. Aegidius Herkenrath returned to Cowlitz Mission as pastor. In 1923, he assisted the parishioners in forming a hall committee, consisting of four men, to design and build a parish hall to be used for meetings, social events and entertaining. By years end the hall was ready for use, was dedicated to St. Joseph, and after some remodeling in later years, is still widely used today.

In 1925, the Kelso/Longview area had increased in population to a point in which a full-time priest was needed in that area. Therefore, the Mission territory was divided, with Kelso/Longview being the center of the southern sector, leaving Winlock, Vader, Napavine, St. Urban and Harmony churches in the northern sector, under the jurisdiction of St. Francis Xavier's at Cowlitz.

In the meantime, St. Mary's Convent School had begun a high school department in 1920, under the direction of Sister Lidwina. In 1922, St. Francis Mission deeded over 7½ acres of land, part of which the school occupied, to the Franciscan Sisters, who in exchange, agreed to teach the children of the parish free of charge for a period of twelve years. Later that year, because of increased enrollment, construction began on a second new wing, which was completed and dedicated in 1923. At the dedication, the school's name was officially changed to St. Mary's Academy. In 1928, another large wing,



ST. JOSEPH'S HALL

occupancy on January 1, 1929. Despite the Depression Years, many improvements were made over the next decade, and St. Mary's Academy became an institution of learning and vocation to be greatly admired.

In 1925, Fr. Aegidius departed Cowlitz once again, only to return two years later. During his absence, Fr. Roman Wolfe became pastor. In 1926, some members of the Knights of Columbus from several surrounding communities, in cooperation with the Washington State Historical Society, erected a stone monument at the entrance to the Mission, displaying a plaque, commemorating it as the oldest permanent mission in the State of Washington. In 1927, Fr. Timothy Watson, who was residing at the Mission at the time, built a new church in Winlock.

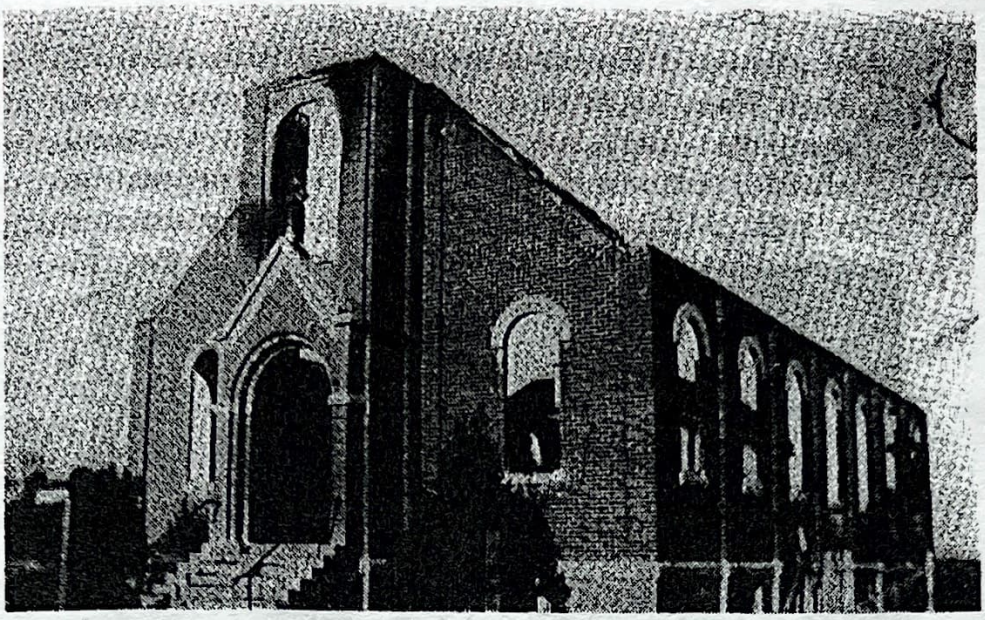
FIRE STRIKES A THIRD TIME:

Fr. Aegidius returned to Cowlitz as pastor in September, 1927. He seem to be exceptionally popular with the young people of the parish, as some of our parishioners who were altar boys at the time remember Fr. Aegidius occasionally taking them on picnics down by the Cowlitz River near the "Ram". But, another event that took place about this time is not remembered with the same joy.

On February 10, 1932, after the evening services on Ash Wednesday, a fire was discovered in the sacristy of St. Francis Mission church. Fire crews from Winlock, Toledo, and Chehalis, and nearby residents rushed to the scene, but the fire overcame their efforts, and the church was once again destroyed. The brick facade, or front of the church, remained standing and the rectory received only smoke damage, but the rest was nothing but charred rubble.

Once again, the parishioners came to the rescue and began the difficult task of cleaning up the mess in preparation of rebuilding. A contractor from Aberdeen was hired and within a few months, the brick church that we see today began to take shape. If one looks closely at the brick exterior, evidence becomes clear of where the new brick was joined with what remained.

On July 3, 1932, three months prior to the dedication of the rebuilt church, Fr. Aegidius had occasion to celebrate his Silver Jubilee. This ceremony had to be held in the Parish Hall, in



FIRE OF 1932

master of ceremonies for the day. Just prior to the celebration, in early December, the students of St. Mary's Academy purchased a new baptismal font and donated it to the church, since the church had been without one.

The celebration was continued in May 1939, after nicer weather arrived. Many events took place throughout that year and several projects were completed, insuring the success of the Centenary. One of the most notable projects was the completion and erection of the Catholic Ladder near the entrance to the church. The carving was done on a cedar log by parishioners Anthony and Leo Borte. Students from St. Mary's also erected a new sign along the highway.

THE LAST FIFTY YEARS:

In May 1940, Fr. Luke was transferred to a Spokane parish and Fr. John Baptist Schunk arrived from Portland as pastor of St. Francis. The whole country was in a turmoil at this time because of the Second World War, in which the United States soon became involved. One bright spot, in the minds of the students anyway, was the completion of the rock "Grotto" behind St. Mary's by parishioner Francis Borte in 1942.

Fr. John left in May 1943, and Fr. Leander Laner, a resident at Cowlitz, became pastor temporarily. Fr. Aegidius also returned for a short time in 1943. Then in April 1944, Fr. Gratian Gabel arrived as pastor. During his two years at Cowlitz, he and Fr. Raymond Smith assisted the parishioners in planning a renovation of St. Joseph's Hall. This job included a new kitchen, new rest rooms, and the walls and ceiling were covered with a new soundproof board called "Silotex"

After Fr. Gratian Gabel left Cowlitz for Santa Barbara in March, 1946, Fr. Raymond assumed the duties as pastor until January, 1947, at which time the new pastor, Fr. Dennis Mahoney, arrived. While Fr. Dennis was assigned to St. Francis, some changes came about in the diocese.

Bishop Shaughnessy had suffered several strokes and finally became confined to his bed. Therefore, Bishop Thomas Connolly was sent from San Francisco and was installed as co-adjutor. On May 18, 1950, Bishop Shaughnessy died, just three days before his 63rd birthday. The population of the state had increased rapidly during the war, so in order to better serve the larger Catholic population, Seattle was changed to an

Archdiocese. In July, 1951, Bishop Thomas Connolly became its first Archbishop. (Just a few months prior to that, October 27, 1950, had marked the 100th anniversary of the installation of Bishop Augustine Blanchet as Bishop of Nesqually, at which time he had issued his Mandate of Entry at Cowlitz Mission.)

In July 1952, Fr. Dennis left Cowlitz for another assignment and Fr. Donald Gander arrived as pastor. Two years later, in 1954, much to the comfort of all concerned, the old wood furnace in the church was replaced by a new oil furnace. During this period of time, fear from the crippling disease of Polio was evident, as indicated by an old issue of the "Prairie Lite." It recorded that 85 students from St. Mary's Academy were bussed to the Toledo High School to receive their "Polio Shots" administered by Dr. W.J. Dugaw a parishioner of St. Francis Mission.

In. 1955, the new freeway was opened near Toledo, thus diverting the Seattle to Portland traffic away from Hwy. 99, which ran adjacent to St. Mary's and the Mission. Also in the fall of 1955, boys were no longer admitted at St. Mary's, so Dr. Dugaw, under the direction of Fr. Donald, began the religious instruction of the boys, which was the beginning of our C.C.D. program.

In 1957, a new 18,000 gal. water storage tank was built behind St. Joseph's Hall, since the old water tower was slowly deteriorating. Soon after, a cement foundation was added to the Hall. Also in 1957, a 4½ acre plot of land next to the school, was purchased from the George Raupp estate, thus giving the Sisters of St. Francis a total of over twelve acres. The custodian, Joe Marty, was given permission to build a home on the grounds for his family.

In June, 1958, Fr. Donald left Cowlitz, and in August Fr. Fabian Gussenhoven became pastor. It soon became evident that the old cemetery had no more plots left for new burials, so an old orchard next to the church was cleared, leveled, and seeded and the new section of the cemetery was ready for use by about 1961. All the labor, once again, had been donated by a few of the men of the parish.

In April, 1961, Golden Jubilee Week was celebrated at St. Mary's Academy, commemorating 50 years of continuous dedication by the Sisters of St. Francis. Archbishop Thomas

Connolly and Fr. Aegidius were just two of the guests that attended the Jubilee High Mass on April 16th.

In 1962, the parishioners of St. Francis formed a work party, removed all furnishings from inside the church, and cleaned and repainted the interior. As stated previously, Fr. Roger returned in 1963, and by January, 1964, Fr. Fabian was reassigned, leaving Fr. Roger to assume the duties of pastor until the arrival of Fr. Adrian Erlenheim in October 1964.

At St. Mary's, by June 1966, the entire grade school department closed due to a lack of students. Enrollment projections for the high school age children still indicated a growth was taking place, so because of the deteriorating conditions of the old buildings, plans were drawn up and construction began on a new million dollar school complex. The new buildings included classrooms, auditorium, dormitory, convent and chapel, which began being occupied in November, 1968. The old wooden structures were torn down, leaving the cement wing, which had been added in 1928. In May 1969, a dedication ceremony took place with the blessing of Archbishop Thomas Connolly.

In 1950, Fr. Conan Lee, who had been a resident at Cowlitz, was assigned as pastor at Winlock, thus establishing it as a parish, and took up residence there. Later that year, plans were drawn up for the remodeling of the rectory at Cowlitz. Many of the parishioners, along with Fr. Adrian and Fr. Roger, helped provide the labor, and by 1972, the rectory had a completely new appearance, with brick facing, more closely resembling the church. Regretfully, Fr. Roger had broken his leg during the remodeling.

In 1973, just five years after the completion of the new complex at St. Mary's, the enrollment had decreased so rapidly that the Academy was closed with the 49th graduating class. A few of the sisters remained to care for the facilities, but the greatly saddened Cowlitz community was without a Catholic school after 62 years of service. Soon, the complex was up for sale, and in 1978, after the last Mass was celebrated in the Chapel on November 10th, the Baptist Church of Winlock acquired the property. But not being able to meet the stipulated payments, they returned the property to the Franciscan Sisters in 1983. Soon afterward, a volunteer advisory board was formed, the name was changed to St. Mary's Center, and the complex was converted to a first-class retreat and conference center.

In 1975, Archbishop Connolly retired and Bishop Raymond Hunthausen was installed as Archbishop of Seattle. On Sunday, September 25, 1977, they were both in attendance at Cowlitz Mission for Fr. Roger's Sacerdotal Jubilee. During the next year, Catholics were saddened with the news of the death of Pope Paul VI in August 1978. A new Pope, John Paul I, was elected the same month, but after a reign of 33 days, he had also died. Shortly thereafter, our present Pope, John Paul II, was elected.

About this same time, it was decided that more classrooms were needed in St. Joseph's Hall, since the children had to use the Toledo School buildings, after hours, for their CCD program. Soon plans were made and construction began, and the rooms were ready for use by the Fall of 1979. In December, Fr. Adrian was re-assigned, and Fr. George Carr arrived as the new pastor. The next Spring, Mt. St. Helens erupted and spread ash over most of eastern Washington. Within a week, another eruption covered most of western Washington with a fine layer of ash also.

In 1985, tragedy struck the hearts of many of St. Francis Mission, when the bodies of two of the elderly parishioners, Ed and Minnie Maurin, were found along a remote logging road, after having been abducted from their home near here. A funeral was held at the Mission on December 28, 1985, and they were buried in the Mission Cemetery. In early 1986, a decision was made to erect a memorial at the entrance to the Mission in their honor. Fr. George purchased a new church sign board, members of the family had the brickwork completed, and other parishioners installed lighting and a bronze plaque in their memory.

By the Summer of 1986, Fr. George was re-assigned, along with the pastor at Sacred Heart Church in Winlock, and Fr. Stephen Barnufsky, accompanied by an assistant, Br. Berard Connolly, arrived to assume the duties of pastor of both parishes. Shortly thereafter, plans were made, committees were formed, and projects were begun in preparation for the upcoming 150th Jubilee Celebration in 1988. At the present time, one of the most difficult projects to be attempted, the carpeting and re-decorating of the interior of the church, has just been completed. Also, St. Joseph's Hall has a new metal roof, and the exterior has been repainted.

In completing this history of our parish, I would like to thank all who have given their time to assist me with this task. I have discovered, by the many interviews and phone conversations that I have had with past and present parishioners and the resident friars, that this parish has almost always been made up of very close knit families and friends. When anyone is in need or something needs to be done, there is always an abundance of charity at hand. We are also truly blessed here at St. Francis Xavier's with the dedicated Apostles of Christ that God sends us from time to time, and I pray that whatever we are faced with, Faith in God will always help give us direction. direction.

Frank F. Ross

APPENDIX "A"

PASTOR	DATE ASSIGNED
Modeste Demers	(Oct. 1839 - June 1842)
*J.B.Z. Bolduc	(Oct. 1842 - May 1843)
*Anthony Langlois	(May 1843 - Sept. 1843)
*J.B.Z. Bolduc	(Sept. 1843 - Oct. 1844)
*Anthony Langlois	(1844 - 1849)
Pretot	(1850 - 1851)
LeClaire	(1851 - 1856)
P. Durieu	(1856 - 1857)
F.X. Prefontaine	(1862 - 1863)
Charles Richards	(1864 - 1873)
Peter Hylebos	(1873 - 1879)
Emil Kauten	(1879 - 1890)
Nicholas Frei	(1890 - 1901)
**Peter Van Holderbeke	(1901 - 1901)
William Palmer	(1901 - 1904)
P.A. Flavin	(1904 - 1906)
(Theatine Fathers)	(1906 - 1908)

*Assigned at St. Francis Mission more than once

**Fr. Holderbeke died from injuries received in the 1901 fire which destroyed St. Francis Mission

Franciscan Friars who served St. Francis Xavier Mission and "the Northern Missions" from 1908 - 1988

1908 - 1915
SACRED HEART PROVINCE

Ewald Soland, OFM
Clement Moorman, OFM
*Aegidius Herkenrath, OFM
Capistran Damek, OFM
George Wehmeyer, OFM
Clement Berberich, OFM
Valentine Dorenkemper, OFM
*Thomas Ziegan, OFM

1915 - 1988
ST. BARBARA PROVINCE

Victor Aertker, OFM
Maximilian Klein, OFM
*Felician Leibeling, OFM
Francis Redman, OFM
Paschal Klaren, OFM
Ignatius Ganster, OFM
Lawrence Mutter, OFM
Henry Stendebach, OFM
Andrew Bucher, OFM
*Daniel McNamara, OFM
Ferdinand Kenny, OFM
Joseph Montford, OFM
Joachim Meier, OFM
*Roman Wolfe, OFM
Timothy Watson, OFM
Stephen Renier, OFM
Leo Simon, OFM
Gabriel McCarthy, OFM
Jerome Lutengger, OFM
Cornelius Synder, OFM
Gregory Carr, OFM
*Matthew Poetzel, OFM
*Ambrose Trabert, OFM
*Roger Agostinelli, OFM
Joachim Thill, OFM
Andrew Bucher, OFM
John Losleben, OFM
Benedict Bartholme, OFM
Modesto Muennemann, OFM
John Baptist Schunk, OFM
Stephen Moheney, OFM
Blaise Bertoncino, OFM
Leander Lander, OFM
Raymond Smith, OFM
*David Doran, OFM
William Clark, OFM
Daniel O'Sullivan, OFM
*Berard Weishaar, OFM
Dennis Mahoney, OFM
Gerald Ryan, OFM
Peter Topic, OFM
Wendelin Golombiewski, OFM
Aloysius Van Wamerdam, OFM
Alphonse Weber, OFM

Gabrian Gabel, OFM
Ambrose Trabert, OFM
Donald Gander, OFM
Joseph LaRue, OFM
Marcellus Leining, OFM
John Capistran Borley, OFM
Tibertius Wand, OFM
Kieran McCarty, OFM
Maurice Van de Walle, OFM
Simon Scanlon, OFM
Mathias Curtain, OFM
Nicholas Heinrich, OFM
Jordan Donovan, OFM
Fabian Gussenhoven, OFM
Lucius Grosso, OFM
Maurice Moore, OFM
Matteo Gurrero, OFM
Edward Meier, OFM
Mathias Burger, OFM
William Siegler, OFM
Conan Lee, OFM
Rudolph Schneider, OFM
Oswald Master, OFM
Adrian Erlenheim, OFM
Linus Hohendorf, OFM
George Carr, OFM
Maurus Kelly, OFM
Hubert Beitel, OFM
Paschal Morrisroe, OFM
Clifford Herle, OFM
Stephen Barnufsky, OFM
Berard Connolly, OFM

*Assigned to St. Francis Xavier Mission more than once.

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